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Contagion Effect: The Effects Of Regions On Individual State Democracies

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CONTAGION EFFECT: THE EFFECTS of REGIONS ON INDIVIDUAL STATE
DEMOCRACIES

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CONTAGION EFFECT: THE EFFECTS of REGIONS ON INDIVIDUAL STATE
DEMOCRACIES

By

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
2. A Regional Look at Influence and Power Presence.....	5
2.1 Examples of Political Contagion.....	6
2.2 Hypotheses and Research Basis.....	7
2.3 Geographic Influence	9
2.4 Economic Influence	11
2.5 Ethnic Fractionalism.....	13
2.6 Democratic Spread, Democratic Reversion, and Trade.....	15
2.7 Summary.....	17
3. Empirical Data and Methods.....	19
3.1 Dependent Variable: State Democracy Level.....	19
3.2 Independent Variables.....	19
3.3 Models.....	23
4. Quantitative Analysis.....	25
5. Conclusion.....	31
Appendix.....	36
List of References.....	39
Curriculum Vita.....	42

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: State Democracy Levels as an effect of Regional Democracy	
Levels	25
Table 2: State democracy levels, regional Democracy, and preponderance.....	28
Graph 1: Marginal Effect of Regional Democracy on Freedomhouse	
Political Rights.....	29
Table 3: Preponderance and Regional Democracy; Additive Model	30

Chapter 1: Introduction

Due to the increased instances of riots and revolts in the Middle East and North Africa, studies involving the spread of democracy have risen in scholarly importance. The call for a change of regimes from an autocracy to a democracy brings back the question of whether these changes can be foreseen. Alternatively, even if one state changes to a democracy, will contagion take effect and spread it to the states in its periphery? This contagion theory is explained as the effect of one state's regime type spreading out and affecting the regime type of other states in its periphery. However, what happens in this regard when there is a preponderant power within a region? What happens if the regional power makes a change or is a democracy? Do these differences in situations have a widespread effect on regional democracy levels? Does the region define the level of democracy these states will be able to obtain or does it have no effect at all? These are questions that I hope this study will answer.

Previous research has focused primarily on the idea of contagion from the standpoint of democratic regimes spreading their influence outwards to other states. Where this study differs is that I also look at what effects regional democracy levels have on the states within the region. Furthermore, I will examine the impact that regional powers, or the lack thereof, have on individual state democracy levels. I hope to set a framework in this study to shed light on regional power influence and possibly draw some conclusions about the role of regional powers on individual state democracy levels.

Democracy as a political system flourished throughout the world in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Huntington, 1991). However, after the third wave of democratization,¹ which began late in the last century, it seems that the establishment of democracies has tapered off

¹ Samuel Huntington explains that there are three waves of democratization that have occurred throughout history. The Third Wave runs from 1974-present although there is a debate about whether it is still ongoing.

(Diamond, 1996). While it is the nature of all governing systems to rise and fall, it has been noted by scholars that democracies are at a higher risk of failing in their infant stages either through internal or external pressures (Mansfield & Snyder, 2009). Externally, neighboring nations have an effect on the level of democracy exhibited by democratic nations. My research question is: Do regional democracy levels affect the democratic levels of states within it? I hypothesize that a democratic nation within a region that has few democratic nations will be less democratic than a nation in a region with many democratic nations. Additionally, I hypothesize that in the absence of a clear regional power, regional levels of democracy will have a greater influence on states within that region than if a regional power was present. I will probe to see if contagion theory, where the actions of neighboring nations impact or influence the actions of the states in close proximity to themselves, holds true when dealing with non-democratic regions and democratic countries.

The importance of political contagion theory lies in its ability to predict possible changes in the geopolitical climate of the world as well as relating to policies and causal mechanisms that lead to democratization, as noted by Pevehouse (2005). Until recently, this form of political study was under the purview of geographers. In bringing this area of study under the scope of political science we can more readily explore the political effects that proximity has on countries.

President Bush's goal of spreading democracy in the Middle East, specifically Iraq and a region that had little to no democratic development, further expresses the current real-life applications of this research. I will be able to help determine if a region strong in or devoid of democracy will help foster the democratic process within the individual states. Essentially, once these democracies and/or autocracies exist, does a regional democracy level impact the level of democracy within states in that region? This research allows for the possibility of forecasting

which regions have democracy levels that are more likely to impact the states located within them. If my hypothesis holds true and a correlation does exist, then there might be a way to predict democracies that could be at risk or countries that may need some form of aid to bolster their democratic regimes. Conversely, this research might also predict authoritarian regimes that could be on the brink of system transformation.

To determine when democracy levels change, we must first define what democracy is for the auspices of this research. Democracy is defined by the ability of a populace to participate freely in the democratic process through the ability to vote, compete for office and elect those who represent them and are held accountable to the populace (Freedomhouse). In looking at regions it is also important to define what a preponderant or regional power is. I define a preponderant power as the state within a region that has the greatest gross domestic product (GDP). GDP is used to define preponderance since it is a decent estimator of purchasing power. A preponderant or regional power is important because they tend to be highly influential in regards to states on their periphery. This can be exhibited in a number of ways: militarily, economically, or even just by sheer size, which can also be a contributing factor to the two former reasons. This power of influence that these states wield can ultimately end up playing a large role on regional democratic levels and by extension, the democracy levels of individual states (Leeson & Dean, 2009). Purchasing power acts as substitute for various sources of influence when dealing with preponderant powers due to its ability to act as an indicator for the economic prosperity of a state. This prosperity relates to economic ability and translates to power on the world market.

My research suggests that a democratic state in a region that is highly democratic is more likely to have a higher level of democracy than states that are in a region with few democratic

states. The results also suggest that regional democracy levels have a positive and significant effect on state democracy levels in the presence of a regional power but only if the regional power is relatively weak. The second finding suggests that the presence of a strong regional power does not significantly affect state democracy level.

Previous research on the contagion effect and the hypotheses I will test can be found in chapter two. Details on the variables selected and methodology used are found in chapter three. Chapter four includes the findings for the statistical tests. The conclusions of the research are in chapter five.

Chapter 2: A Regional Look at Influence and Power Presence

Existing literature dealing with democratic contagion theory² has mostly covered the outward spread of democracy from democratic nations to non-democratic nations. Essentially, these studies have examined the effects of democracy on non-democratic states, but not vice versa. The ability of democracies to spread outwards has been studied by Mansfield (2009), Gleditsch (2002), Keohane (1984) and others. President Eisenhower described a similar phenomenon as the domino principle. His idea was that the contagious element or contagion itself was carried on the political-economic features of communism. This was used to explain the alignment of states with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Recently, President George W. Bush has used contagion theory as the basis of the U.S. presence in Iraq. Contagion, or the watershed effect as president Bush called it, was said to be a key reason for invading Iraq so that the democracy started in that country could then spread to the rest of the region (Bush, 2003).

There has been extensive research on preponderant powers but hardly any on the effects of regional democracy levels on regions lacking a preponderant power. A dominant regional power is a state that is dominant both economically and militarily within a given region. What is notable about a dominant power is the scope with which they are able to spread their influence upon the states within their periphery. Due to the continued presence of regional powers until recently, the role of a region lacking a dominant power has not been thoroughly explored. The importance of a regional power in relation to the democratic levels of individual states lies in the ability to look at a region and determine if democratic states within that region are likely to have their democracy levels altered by the influence a power has on that region. This allows for a

² Democratic contagion, the watershed effect, domino theory, and the neighborhood effect all refer to the phenomenon of the regime type of one state spreading out to affect the regime type of others within close proximity.

possible forecast to be made into which democracies might be at higher risk of no longer being democracies.

The presence of some of the democracies that existed in the world prior to the third wave can be attributed somewhat to the example shown by the United States. The stability of this nation both economically and militarily supported the idea that democracy leads to a more enduring or stable regime. It was the idea of Truman, Eisenhower, and presidents after them to battle the spread of communism by spreading and supporting democracy throughout the world (Leeson & Dean, 2009). The fact that only one internal war has been fought in the United States over a two hundred year period has also led to the idea that democracies through their inherent ability to serve the people are able to keep their populace content and thus prevent a destabilizing inner turmoil. This is due to the ability of citizens within democracies to institute change if they are discontent. From an outside perspective, this can seem ideal to the citizenry of other states.

2.1 Examples of Political Contagion

While it might be argued that it was a form of military occupation, the spread of communism by the U.S.S.R. following World War II is a good example of contagion theory where a non-democratic regime influences its neighbors, an argument supported by Eisenhower's ideas. The Soviet Union's presence in the region influenced the national and domestic politics of the periphery around its borders. The doctrine and practices of the Soviet Union bled into levels of freedom of the surrounding region and thus made the democratic levels³ of those areas lower than they would have been without its presence. In some cases, their influence promoted the disappearance of democracy completely, with some states switching to authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. An example would be Czechoslovakia, modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia, which was a democracy prior to Word War II and after the war suffered a

³ Democratic level or democratic scores refers to the Freedom House political rights scores.

long period of communism propagated by the Iron Curtain and the dominant presence of the Soviet Union. An example of this today would be the political changes that occurred in Venezuela and Bolivia and their efforts to aid non-democratic regimes within their region.

Alternately, the United States, of the same period and of today, is an example of contagion, but from the democratic side as opposed to the totalitarian side. The Americas are more apt than the rest of the world to be influenced by the United States due to shared organizations and trade agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the OAS (Organization of American States), and due to geographic proximity. However, similar to what happened with democracies rising with the fall of the Iron Curtain, there were instances of states establishing regimes that were opposite to the regional power. While the United States had a tendency to help out authoritarian regimes as long as they were not communist, in some cases their influence did ultimately promote democracy. Nicaragua served as an example of this while under the Sandinista regime as well as Panama after the remove of Manuel Noriega.

2.2 Hypotheses and the Research Basis

My thesis will focus on the regional effects of democracy on the individual states that comprise a given region. Contagion or political neighborhood theory showcase how the policies and actions of states affect those of the states within close proximity to them and allow for a look into regional effects on states lying within. I present two hypotheses that deal with the effects of regional contagion effect on the states within a region. First, a democratic state within a region that has few democratic nations will have lower democratic levels than a state in a region with many democratic nations. Second, the absence of a clear regional power will cause regional

levels of democracy to have a higher impact on states that exist within the region than if a regional power were present.

Kristian Gleditsch's (2002) "political neighborhood" theory explains that states exist in context with each other geographically, politically, and economically and that the relationship cannot be ignored. Gleditsch claims that states neighboring democracies are more likely to democratize, leading to zones of relative peace. It is shown that zones of peace in stable and peaceful neighborhoods tend to stay that way for a long time. Leeson and Dean (2009) discuss the idea of democratic domino theory when explaining how the United States has justified its intervention in Iraq. Democratic domino theory is defined as an increase or decrease in democracy in one state and its spread or "infecting" of neighboring states, thus increasing or decreasing their democracy in turn. According to President Bush (2003), establishing a democratic regime in the heart of a non-democratic region in the Middle East will act as a watershed event that would spread democracy throughout the region. By installing a democracy in Iraq, American occupation would lead to a domino effect where the Middle East would become democratized. The assumption underlying this hypothesis is that changes in one state's political regime type will affect the political regimes of the neighboring states. Leeson & Dean (2009) also state that on the opposite side of the domino argument, decreases in democracy within one state may also infect neighboring states, reducing their democracy, which in turn would spread to their neighbors and reduce democracy on a large scale.

The query I pose is that if democracy can expand outwards as a regime type, why is it not possible that authoritarianism can similarly expand? It is likely that a democratic regime established in a region devoid of democracies will suffer from a lower democratic level than

others due to the sheer presence and numbers of the non-democratic regimes within the regions presented.

Leeson and Dean's (2009) research provides support for democratic domino theory in that democracy does spread but that its spread is not very large. Their analysis shows that only about eleven percent of a state's average geographic neighbors changes democracy levels. The authors contend that due to the "lightness", or the small amount of change that domino theory falls with, interstate intervention set at promoting democracy will only have a small effect on any possible democratic changes within the entire region. This is not to say, however, that authoritarian influence in a region does not carry a heavier contagion effect within a region. It could be possible that where democracies work from the inside out, authoritarian influence does the same. A state could spread its authoritarian values such as limited freedom and a lack of universal suffrage to other states within a region. While it is more likely that an authoritarian state would just take over a state if it had the opportunity, other possibilities cannot be dismissed without research.

2.3 Geographic Influence

States interact with each other due to a variety of needs. This interaction has an effect on internal policies and by extension the regime by which a state is governed. A democratic state within a region where the majority of countries largely have low levels of democracy is more likely to have its own level of democracy suffer because of the contagion effect. There are a couple of factors that would affect this, such as size and the number of states bordering the state. Size relative to neighboring states and the number of borders denotes a higher or lower need for security, and a state with a higher need for security is more likely to enact laws that are less democratic in its need for security (Siaroff, 2008).

A democratic superpower surrounded by smaller, weaker nations is most likely to have the larger influence than a democratic superpower surrounded by larger more powerful nations. The reason for this is the lower cost for the smaller nations, as opposed to larger nations, to bandwagon than there is for them to unite against the superpower. However, if a region is lacking a clear regional power, a low regional democratic level is likely to affect the level of democracy within a democratic country within the region. In the absence of a clear preponderant power that influences the actions of a state, the combined actions of a region will greatly impact an individual state within it. One reason for this phenomenon is a greater need for smaller states to band together to have the same influence in worldwide politics and trade.

In attempting to keep the cost of security low, states will band together collectively in order to spread out the cost amongst several states, thus lowering the cost of defense to any one individual state. Essentially, absence of preponderant power causes more interdependence and reliance among states within a region. This interdependence causes the actions of one state to greatly affect the actions of others within the same region. Subsequently, a low democratic level or a change in the democratic level of a region will more greatly affect the individual state's democratic scores within a region significantly based on each state being dependent on another, causing any shift within a region to affect its constituent parts more than if a preponderant power existed. Conversely, the presence of a preponderant power would mean a great change within the preponderant power's degree of democracy would have a much larger effect on regional and individual democratic levels rather than changes within any of the region's other individual states.

Alan Siaroff (2008) explains that states with larger neighbors with the exception of Mexico run a higher risk of incursion and thus have larger militaries. Siaroff also argues that

countries with higher levels of militarization (size of armed forces per population) generally have lower democratic scores. However, democratic states often tend to be surrounded by other democratic states, thus holding true to the supposition that democratic states will have higher democracy scores by nature of how they work in principle and due to regional levels. In the case of countries with more borders, they generally have lower democratic scores because they need to lower certain rights in order to properly defend against incursion. Since democratic peace theory states that democracies do not engage in warfare with other democracies, it can be inferred that differences in regime types among neighbors aids in the idea that numerous borders contribute to lowered democratic levels.

2.4 Economic Influence

In order to properly understand the theory behind regional democratic levels in the absence of a preponderant power, it is necessary to examine state and regional activities where a preponderant power is present. Particularly in the case of states that lack a valued resource with which to power their economy, financial assistance is often needed to bolster a fragile economy. The importance of capital in development plans means that in such cases, foreign investment or assistance is sought (Lewis, 2002). A preponderant power in such cases is often the state providing the money as they generally have stable economies and investment capital. In the case of some states that are in close proximity to a preponderant country, this can mean adopting the regime type of the preponderant power in order to secure financial considerations. In the case of Caribbean states in the 1980s, this meant adopting an anti-communist regime as well as supporting the United States within international forums. While in this case the stance was not necessarily successful, it shows that the presence of a preponderant power can be the largest contributor to individual state democracy levels when there is a large gap between the economic

output of the power and those states within close proximity to it. Thus in these cases, it is shown that the preponderant power has a larger influence on individual state democracy levels than on the democracy levels of the region as a whole. I argue that in the absence of a preponderant power, regional levels would more greatly impact democracy levels of states within a region due to there being more of a need to rely on each other, taking into consideration the resources of the other states.

In looking at the OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) political union and their attempts to join the Caribbean states together to form a collective unity, Lewis (2002) explains some phenomena dealing with the role of a group of small states in the absence of a regional power. The states of the Eastern Caribbean and by extension the OECS are small but wholly democratic in nature. In their attempts to become an entity on the world market, they tried to form as a collective entity. In the case of regional integration, states in regions without a clear regional power either have to continue working alone or band together to make some impact on the international market. This is exactly what the states of the Caribbean were trying to achieve with the formation of the OECS. If a state attempts to try to have a presence in the international market on its own, then a valued resource such as oil is required in order to have an impact. Along these lines, in regions lacking a regional power, the regional level of democracy will impact the states within the region more greatly if there is a need for the states to work more closely together for instances of increased trade.

In the case of states that choose to work alone, the presence of a valued resource is a necessity. A resource such as oil allows for a state to be able to act independently due to the demand associated with it. However, a large presence of oil as a commodity has a higher than average chance of leading to a state becoming autocratic. This occurrence has been largely

examined within states existing in the Middle East but has also occurred in Libya, Venezuela, and Iraq until the recent war.

Ross (2001) explains that some political scientists have attributed this state phenomenon to those states that are described as “rentier states”. A rentier state is a state where the rents are paid by foreign actors. A rent is described as payments that are doled out for such things as pipeline crossings, transit fees, and passage through canals. In a rentier state, very few are involved in the generation of the wealth or rent that goes directly to the state. With so few involved in the distribution of the wealth, it is much easier to circumvent the utilization of the wealth (rent) in these states. Ultimately, the idea of rentierism is split into two schools of thought. Either oil wealth makes states less democratic or it causes a government to do a poorer job of promoting economic development. Ross supposes that oil wealth causes the states that rely on it to have enhanced state bureaucracy with which the people subsequently have some, if not all, of their freedom suppressed. Ultimately, states are able to function more easily as an individual entity with the presence of a valued resource like oil, but if most of the revenue for it comes from outside that state, then it runs a higher risk of being autocratic.

2.5 Ethnic Fractionalism

Looking at another way that democracy might be influenced within a state or region, ethnic fractionalism is discussed as a possible contributing factor to low democracy levels. The term ethnic fractionalism has become prevalent in recent years due to the growing instances of ethnic conflict. The term as I use is defined by a schism amongst different ethnic groups within a state that leads to conflict either politically or militarily based on ethnic identity. Even within that definition, many different types of fractionalism can be seen to occur. Divided societies that are

fragmented into many contending groups can be bipolar, multipolar, or can feature dominant majorities or dominant minorities.

Ethnic fractionalism has been traditionally viewed as detrimental to the democratic process due to the belief that a divided society hinders democracy. Reilly (2001) explains that traditionally the presence of numerous ethnic groups leads to politicization of ethnic demands, which subsequently leads to zero-sum winner-take-all politics where some groups are included and other are excluded. Chirot (2009) further expands that if ethno-religious communities that compete with each other place their values and loyalties above those of the national interest, then stable democracy is highly unlikely. Due to the tendency of central political ideas to get overwhelmed by extremist views in this system, divisiveness and conflict between groups increases with one group receiving gains at the expense of another. Due to the ease of outbidding over accommodation within politics eventually democratic failure is likely seen as a result.

Due to the politicization of ethnic demands, some scholars suggest that ethnic fractionalism alone undermines democracy in certain cases. Cultural or religious pride being more important for groups than national goals is at the core of the argument as to why democracies can cease or fail to be stable. This is not to say that the presence of several ethnic groups will prevent democracy from occurring. Ethnic tensions have caused an undermining of democracy in Sri Lanka while a stable democracy exists in India despite the presence and tensions involving numerous ethnic groups. However, ethnic tensions also exist between India and Pakistan over the region of Kashmir. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the democracy levels of both India and Sri Lanka were identical. It is only with the additional influence of terrorism within Sri Lanka that the democratic level began to rise within one country and not the other. These instances of terrorism can either lead to destabilization of democracy or they can lead to a

tightening of state security. The tightening of state security can lead to the restriction of political rights (Reilly, 2001). Terrorism due to ethnic fractionalization did occur in India, but since it was international in nature, it did not lead to a similar amount of degradation in democracy. These factors are what account for the differences in democratic levels between India and Sri Lanka. As these two countries illustrate, internal ethnic divisions do not necessarily have the same results for democracy.

If one spreads out further to look at regions and regional conflict, the presence of ethnic identities across interstate lines can also have a negative effect on state democracy levels. In situations such as the India/Pakistan situation in Kashmir and the ongoing Arab/Israeli conflicts, interstate ethnic identities can cause and perpetuate wars. As previously discussed, war tends to keep democracy levels lower than what they might ordinarily be in peace times. The reason for this tendency is due to the safety of the citizenry becoming more important than some other aspects of democracies, such as the freedom of speech in some cases. Ultimately, ethnic fractionalism and ethnic tensions can have a great effect on democracy levels within states and within regions depending on the level of dissatisfaction exhibited by the various ethnic groups.

2.6 Democratic Spread, Democratic Reversion, and Trade

Looking at reasons why interstate influence can affect domestic democratic levels, trade is one of the most obvious variables to measure. Trade acts as an impetus in many cases, facilitating a good deal of interaction between countries with each one looking out for its own interests in regards to trade. Keohane (1984) explains that when states experience the success of international regimes, they learn to change their own behavior and to redefine their national interests. For example, Mansfield and Snyder (2009) discuss how economic reform plays a role in democratization. Over the last decade, several international organizations such as the IMF

(International Monetary Fund) have pushed for states to liberalize both politics and the economy as a condition to receive aid because democratization has been viewed as likely to promote economic reform. Therefore, democratization has a high chance of increasing the accountability of government officials, thus giving an incentive for the implementation of policies that enhance the economic performance of a given state.

It has been said that the third wave of democratization has ended (Diamond, 1996). A good part of this idea can be attributed to the shift in a number of states from democratic regimes to non-democracies since the end of the Cold War. This can be evidenced by such countries as Belarus, which has essentially reverted back to the pre fall of communism days. As Clark et al. (2009) discuss, democracy generally occurs from either a top-down approach, where leaders institutionalize liberalizing reforms, or a bottom-up approach, where the populace rises to overthrow the ruling regime. The latter is what has occurred and seems to be happening recently within the Middle East and Northern Africa. The spread of civil wars within these regions where higher levels of democracy is the main goal supports the idea of contagion theory. Regardless of the method involved, democracies seem to be more stable in states where democracy has existed before. In having institutional processes in place for democracy, there is more stability with which to battle a regression to authoritarianism.

In being located in a high level democratic region, there are more incentives to not revert back to a previous regime type. Geographic proximity to another democracy aids in the stability of democracy as it tends to spread outwards. Supporting the idea that countries in highly democratic regions are more likely to have higher democratic levels respectively is the idea that during war time levels of democracy generally decrease. Conflict initiated by the violation of a state's sovereignty can serve to make alliances or to bolster already existing ones. Subsequently,

geographic proximity does play a large role in the level of democracy but is not a determining factor in some cases.

Trade is more likely to be higher between states that already have an existing relationship as well as between a democracy and an autocracy where the democracy is trying to spread democratic ideals. The United States currently practices this latter strategy in their dealings with China. Members of organizations sometimes increase levels of trade with each other due in part to a preexisting relationship which makes it so that backing out of an agreement has a higher opportunity cost. If the organization is democratic in nature, it is likely to have rules where a state has to be democratic in order to be a member. It is essential for democracies by their very nature to try to use trade to promote democratic values, also shown by U.S. policy in regards to China. The question remains whether states, by liberalizing economic development, affect other states. Due to the way democracy spreads outwards through the contagion effect, the answer to that question tends to point to yes. However, the presence of a high demand resource like oil can undercut the democratic ideals of a state due to the high demand of the resource promoting the hoarding of the resource and therefore promoting authoritarianism in states where it is prevalent.

2.7 Summary

It is known that democratic states can have an effect on the democratic levels of non-democratic states within their proximity. While a relationship between regional democracy levels and state democracy levels can be extrapolated from existing literature, a deeper look into existing literature is needed in order to provide a stronger basis for the relationship between regional and state democracy. I reviewed the existing literature and have noticed that a variety of factors seem to have a possibility on impacting the relationship between the two variables, such as ethnic fractionalism, armed conflict, and the presence of resources. With that in mind, I

aim to measure these effects to determine if one is more important than another in its ability to affect the underlying question.

The core of this research revolves around the idea of contagion effect, that the actions, practices, and/or ideas of one state affect the states surrounding them, and that the regional practices and/or habits affect the states within it. The idea of contagion effect in terms of democracies is promulgated on the idea of democratic peace theory that democracies do not go to war with each other. Therefore, if every state is a democracy, there will no longer be any war. This is the backbone for the practice of democracies promoting the formation and existence of other democracies. It has been established that democracies generally have relatively higher GDP per capita (gross domestic product) than non-democracies. This idea can be seen in the way that the United States deals with China currently. Contagion theory in this sense is looked at to determine if the regional levels of democracy influence levels of the states within, regardless of whether they are democracies, autocracies, or another regime type.

With all this in mind, the research question I will explore is: Do regional democracy levels affect the democratic levels of states within it? There are two hypotheses that I will look at in the course of this study. My first hypothesis is that a democratic state within a region that has few democratic nations will have lower democratic levels than a state in a region with many democratic nations. My second hypothesis is that the absence of a clear regional power will cause regional levels of democracy to have a higher impact on states that exist within the region than if a regional power were present.

Chapter 3: Empirical Data and Methods

The core of this research revolves around the idea of contagion effect, that the actions, practices, and/or ideas of one state affect the states surrounding it and regional practices and/or habits have an effect on the states within it. I plan to first examine if a democratic state within a region that has few democratic nations will have lower democratic levels than a democratic state in a highly democratic region. Secondly, I will explore whether the absence of a clear regional power will cause regional levels of democracy to have a higher impact on states that exist within the region than states that exist in regions with regional powers. The empirical strategy being used is based around the use of cross-sectional time-series data.

3.1 Dependent Variable: State Democracy Level

The dependent variable of this analysis is the democratic level of an individual state in a given year. The level of a state's democracy is obtained using the yearly political rights levels of a state as a proxy for democracy. State political rights data are obtained from yearly Freedom House scores measured on an interval from one to seven, with one being a highly democratic state to seven being a highly non-democratic state. Freedom House explains political rights as the process enabling people to participate freely in the political process through the right to vote, compete for public office and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate. It is to this end that I will examine the relationship between the independent variables and their possible effect on democracy levels.

3.2 Independent Variables

To classify regions I used regional designations that Freedom House uses, providing the six individual regions: the Americas, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Sahara Africa, and Asia-Pacific. The independent variables are

regional democracy levels, GDP per capita, fuel exports, religious fractionalism, and the presence of international, ethnic, or civil warfare or violence within a state. For the second hypothesis, I use regional power and an interaction term between regional power and regional democracy levels. By including a lagged dependent variable I correct for autocorrelation that is present in the data.

In order to do this I use a compiled dataset which contains variables that deal with democracy levels and variables that have been shown to affect or that might possibly affect levels of democracy. Values for the independent variable, regional democracy, were obtained using Freedom House democracy scores for states within a region. This regional average variable is calculated by averaging the democratic scores of the states within a given region without the score of the country in question. This allows for a look at the impact of regional democracy levels on individual state levels within a given year.⁴ As mentioned, this variable is interval in nature measured in the scale of one to seven with one being very democratic and seven being very non-democratic with a mean value of 3.938.

The independent variable, preponderant power, measures the possible impact of a regional power on the states that are its regional neighbors. The GDP data I used was provided by the World Bank in their World Development Indicators. I determined a preponderant power by which state within a region has the greatest GDP. In order to create the variable I took GDP of the regional power and then divided by the sum of the GDP's of the other states within the region to obtain a ratio which can then be used to measure the influence of the preponderant power on the region itself. This measure is the same as one used by Kugler, Lemke, and Tammen (2000) in describing state power. A state with a higher GDP will have more political influence in its

⁴ The regions, states, and regional powers are based off of the Freedom House definitions of regions and are listed in Appendix 1

international dealings. The variable is ratio in nature and based on the ratio that the regional power accounts for in regards to the combined GDP of the states in the rest of the region. The mean regional power ratio is .7387 of the total region's GDP. The range of regional power ratio strength goes from the weakest at .2959 to the strongest at 2.1365. The regional powers for the six regions are Germany, Iran, Japan, Russia, South Africa, and the United States.

Trying to determine what classifies as a regional power is not a set in stone process. A regional power can be classified as the nation that has the largest military expenditure, the literal size of a state, population size, or simply based on which country has the highest levels of trade. There is not a set standard for what constitutes a regional power. To this end I took GDP data and used it for the basis of my preponderant power variable. The reason for this is due to GDP being a decent indicator of a state's economic power. Can this be enough of an estimator for which state is a regional power? Yes. This is mainly due to the influence states with the largest GDP are able to wield in dealings with other states around the world, let alone locally within their own region. Where this can be a problem is when the state with the second largest GDP (China) has a GDP that is close to the state with the largest GDP (Japan). We see instances of this in the Middle East region where Iran is a comparatively weak regional power and in the East Asia region where the second most powerful country is not far behind the first. The simplest way to adjust for this while still using GDP data as the standard of what is a regional power would be to divide the regions further so that there are more regions to measure. This is something that should be adjusted for in the future.

Fuel exports deals with individual state fuel exports as a measure of the percentage it constitutes of merchandise exports and is provided by the World Bank World Development Indicators. For the purposes of this study I use fuel as a proxy variable in place of oil. The

importance of using this variable is to ascertain if the presence of fuel has a strong impact on state democracy levels. The mean value for this variable is 16.7287 percent of a state's total merchandise exports.

GDP per capita is a lagged variable and an approximation of the average production by each person per country. This variable is also provided by the World Bank and is used as an estimate of prosperity within a state. The mean for this variable is \$ 5152.43. In order to minimize skewness I use the natural logarithmic measure of this variable.

The variable pertaining to religious fractionalization is used to look at the potential relationship between the existence of multiple religions in a given state and any relation to democracy levels. The variable was compiled by Alberto Alesina et al. (2003) to measure religious fractionalism as a percentage to measure what portion of a state's population belongs to a certain religious group. The mean of this variable is .42214. I chose this particular fractionalization variable as opposed to others presented due to the fewer missing values.

Actotal is a composite variable created by Monty Marshall (1999) for a dataset used by the Center for Systemic Peace. The variable is composite in nature because it measures instances of civil, ethnic, and international warfare and violence. This warfare variable, which is ratio in measure, accounts for state deaths as resulting from episodes of international violence, international warfare, civil violence, civil warfare, ethnic warfare, and ethnic violence. In much the same way as GDP per capita, I use the natural logarithmic measure of this variable to minimize skewness. The mean for this variable is .2947 on a scale of zero to three with zero meaning the state has no instances of warfare and three meaning that there are numerous instances of warfare.

The interaction term is a combination of regional democracy and preponderance power variables for the purposes of measuring the possible effects when both are present. All of the variables listed above except for those stated otherwise were compiled as a dataset as provided to me by Taeko Hiroi.

The time period being examined is 1972 to 2006 due to the availability of Freedomhouse scores and GDP data for this period of time. The one exception is due to the absence of GDP data that I had available to me at the time, the preponderant power variable data for Eastern Europe is only measured from 1989 to 2006.

3.3 Models

The basic hypothesized relationship between the dependent and independent variables within the two equations is both additive and multiplicative. Each variable is believed to affect individual state democracy levels independent of other factors. The models are estimated with OLS regression in order to observe how much a change in the independent variable affects changes in the dependent variable.

In measuring the impact of the variables on state democracy levels I will incorporate the variables I have mentioned previously. These are the basic equations for both hypotheses being examined. The basic equation for hypothesis I is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level of Democracy within an individual state} = & \alpha + (b_1) \text{ Level of Democracy within an} \\ & \text{individual state}_{(t-1)} + (b_2) \text{ Regional Democracy levels}_{(t-1)} + (b_3) \text{ GDP per capita}_{(\text{natural} \\ & \text{logarithm})} + (b_4) \text{ Fuel export} + (b_5) \text{ Religious Fractionalization}_{(t-1)} + (b_6) \text{ Episodes of} \\ & \text{warfare or violence}_{(\text{natural logarithm})} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

The equation for hypothesis II is:

Level of Democracy within an individual state = $\alpha + (b_1)$ Level of Democracy within an individual state_(t-1) + (b_2) Regional Democracy levels _(t-1) + (b_3) Regional Power _(t-1) + (b_4) Interaction Variable[(Region Democracy) (Regional Power)] + (b_5) GDP per capita_(natural logarithm) + (b_6) Fuel Export + (b_7) Religious Fractionalization + (b_8) Episodes of warfare or violence_(natural logarithm) + ε

Chapter 4: Quantitative Analysis

The hypotheses proposed in chapter two were tested using both models shown at the end of chapter three. The hypotheses, drawn from literature on contagion theory, were set to examine the impact of regional factors on individual state democracy. The two models, particularly the second, are distinguished by the inclusion of regional democracy levels, and in the case of the latter the inclusion of regional powers. Model two expands the research further than model one by looking at regional democratic influence in the absence of regional power. Estimation results are included in tables one and two.

Table 1. State Democracy Levels as an effect of Regional Democracy Levels		
Independent Variables	Coefficient Estimates	Std. Err.
Level of Democracy within an individual state (lagged)	0.936*	0.012
Regional Democracy Levels (lagged)	0.035*	0.009
Fuel Export	0.002*	0.001
Ln GDP per capita (lagged)	-0.02	0.012
Ln Episodes of warfare or violence	0.017	0.017
Religious Fractionalization	0.047	0.055
Constant	.14	0.111
R ²	0.9423	
Prob > Chi Squared	.0000	
N	2822	
Note: The dependent variable is the state democracy level.		
*p < .05.		

Looking at the first hypothesis, I tested whether a democratic state in a region with few democracies will have a lower democracy level than a democratic state in a region with many. The data analysis results for model one show that there are three statistically significant

variables. The table shows that instances of violence are not significant. As previously noted, the higher the Freedom House score, the less democratic the state or region is. The positive relationship supports the hypothesis in that regions with lower democracies do seem to alter the democracy levels of democratic states in a region towards being less democratic.

Fractionalization along religious lines does not significantly affect a state's level of political freedom.

The relationship between political rights and GDP per capita is not significant. Conversely, fuel exports are of importance due to the significance and the positive relationship between the variables. There is a positive relationship between reverse political scores levels and the percentage of fuel exports a state has. Fuel is seen to make a state's Freedom House score rise or act at lowering a state's democratic level. We see that for every percentage point increase in the fuel as a percentage of a state's exports, reverse political rights levels rises by .0017 of a point. Therefore, we can see that the presence of oil is associated with less democracy.

The results of the statistical analysis reveal that in regions where regional democracy is high, there will be higher levels of democracy and vice versa. In determining whether democratic states in regions with few democracies will have lower levels of democracy, we can safely say that a region low in democracy will have a negative impact on the democracy levels of states within that region. The research supports the first hypothesis with regional democracy. The question of how much of an effect a region has on particular state is something to be looked at in further detail but the data supports that there is a significant causality in the relationship between the two.

The second hypothesis posed is, in the absence of a clear regional power, regional levels of democracy will have a greater impact on the political rights levels of states within the region

itself. In order to get a good measure of possible impacts revolving around this theory, the variable concerning regional powers had to be added in addition to the ones used in the first hypothesis. The other new variable to the equation is an interaction term that combines both the regional levels of democracy variable with the preponderant power variable.

The creation of the compiled variables has been discussed previously as has the description of the independent variable dealing with regional democracy. The only independent variables included in this hypothesis but not the first are regional power and the interaction term, and all others are the same and have been previously discussed. The regional power variable has a mean value of .7387.

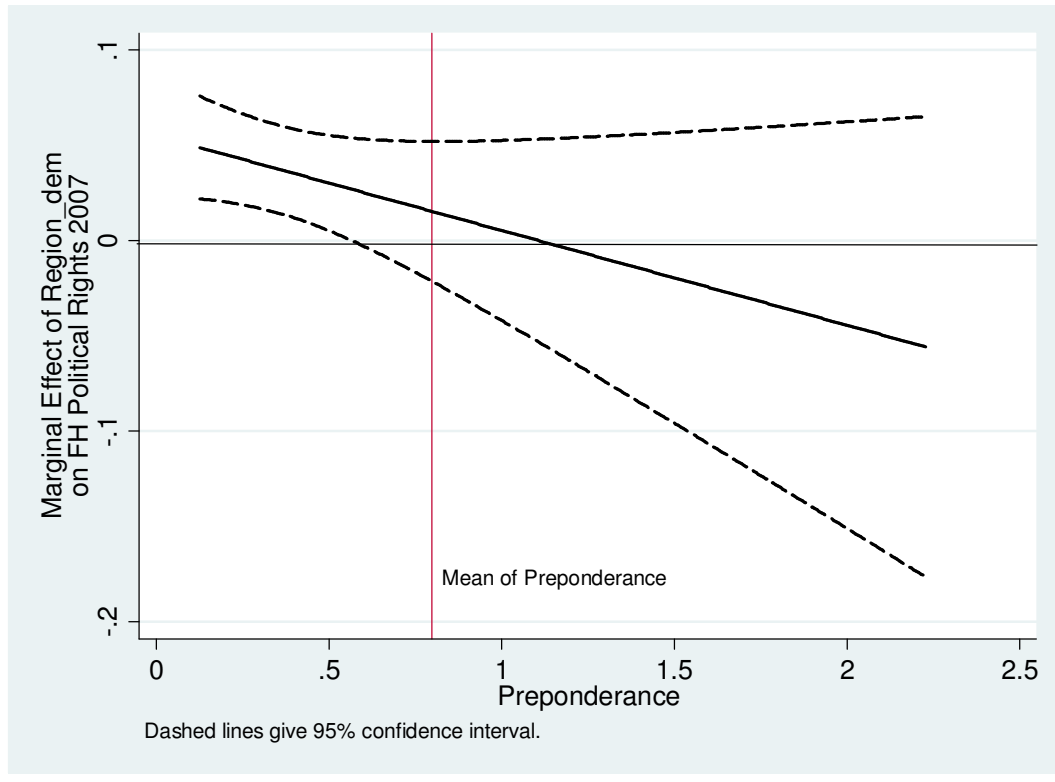
In examining the variables themselves in detail we can discern that there are four statistically significant variables within hypothesis two. Regional democracy levels do have a significant effect on the political rights levels of a state within a given region in regards to the coefficients for preponderant power and its interaction term. Since an interaction term is used, any possible correlation will be conditional.

The analysis of the time series data pertaining to the second model yielded some results that were somewhat similar to that of the first hypothesis. GDP per capita, while not significant in hypothesis one, is significant in hypothesis two. For every one point increase in the natural log of GDP per capita, there is a decrease in a state's reverse democracy score by .03. This indicates that the higher a state's GDP per capita, the more democratic the state will be. Religious fractionalization fails to significantly affect the political rights levels of a state. Additionally, the instance of conflict or warfare also proves to be statistically insignificant.

Table 2. State democracy levels, regional Democracy, and preponderance		
Independent Variables	Coefficient Estimates	Std. Err.
Level of Democracy within an individual state (lagged)	0.936*	0.015
Regional Democracy Levels (lagged)	0.035*	0.013
Fuel Export	0.002*	0.001
Ln GDP per capita (lagged)	-0.026*	0.013
Ln Episodes of warfare or violence	0.014	0.019
Religious Fractionalization	0.016	0.063
Regional Power	0.049	0.075
Interaction (Regional Power/Regional Democracy)	-0.03	0.027
Constant	0.232	.13
R ²	.9421	
Prob > Chi Squared	0.0000	
N	2282	
Note: The dependent variable is individual state democracy levels.		
*p < .05.		

Graph one plots the marginal effect of regional democracy at various levels of preponderance. Regional democracy has a positive and significant effect only if the regional power in question is a weak one. If a regional power is stronger than approximately, .5, then regional democracy does not significantly affect an individual state’s democratic level. This supports hypothesis two.

Graph 1: Marginal Effect of Regional Democracy on Freedomhouse Political Rights



Examining the second hypothesis without the interaction term reveals some significance amongst the variables. In the absence of the interaction term, regional power is insignificant. In table three regional democracy is significant. For every point increase in the democratic score of regional democracy, there is a .037 point increase in the democracy score of an individual state. Therefore, as the regional democracy decreases, so does individual state democracy for the states within the same region. Regardless, absence the circumstance associated with the interaction term, table three shows that the presence of a regional power is not enough to significantly affect the level of an individual state's democracy levels.

Table 3. Preponderance and Regional Democracy; Additive Model		
Independent Variables	Coefficient Estimates	Std. Err.
Level of Democracy within an individual state (lagged)	0.919*	0.017
Regional Democracy levels (lagged)	0.037*	0.011
Fuel Export	0.002*	0.001
Ln GDP per capita (lagged)	-0.035*	0.012
Ln Episodes of warfare or violence	0.028	0.02
Religious Fractionalization	-0.026	0.062
Regional Power	-0.03	.018
Constant	0.367	.117
R	.9251	
Prob > Chi Squared	.0000	
<i>N</i>	2472	
Note: The dependent variable is individual state democracy levels.		
*p < .05.		

The first model supports prior research and is consistent with the work by Gleditsch that democracies tend to promote other democracies and bolsters the idea that states in regions with higher democracy levels are likely to be more democratic themselves. The second model explains that regional democracy has a positive and significant effect only if the regional power in question is a weak one. While this is not something posited on by many authors to a great degree, it does make sense that in a region where a weak regional power exists any regional change is going to affect individual states. In regions such as these, states are going to be more comparative in power and changes in regional democratic levels are more likely to impact an individual state's democratic levels due to this. Overall, these findings confirm Leeson's idea that democracies beget other democracies but that the impact is minimal.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research has centered on the question: Do regional democracy levels affect the democratic levels of states within it? The hypotheses in question are that a democratic nation within a region that has few democratic nations will have lower democratic levels than a nation in a region with many democratic nations, and secondly, that in the absence of a clear regional power, regional levels of democracy will have a heightened influence on states within that region than if a regional power was present.

Geographic proximity has often been considered as a contributing factor in state influence. Where other studies have looked at the influence of state democracy in spreading democracy to other states within a region, this study focuses on regional influences on the individual state. In particular, this study examined whether a democratic state within a region with low levels of democracy will have their democracy affected and additionally, the impact of a region lacking a regional power on the democracy levels of individual states within the region. The results support hypothesis one: that a democratic state will have lower levels of democracy if the region in which it resides has lower levels of democracy as opposed to states in regions with a high concentration of democratic states. The relationship suggests that as a region becomes less democratic, the democratic states within that region are more susceptible to suffering a lowering of their democracy levels. The results for hypothesis two support the theory made with my initial statement. Hypothesis two is supported because it is shown that regional democracy has a positive and significant effect only if the regional power in question is a weak one. If a regional power is stronger than approx. .5, then regional democracy is not significant in affecting a state's democratic level.

According to Leeson and Dean (2009), democratic domino effects where democracy within one state spreads outwards to other states within close proximity, has helped the propagation of democracy. It has also been implied by them that the inverse could possibly be true. The difficulty in looking at this quantitatively has been in finding a proper way to gain a regional measurement and to attempt to mitigate some of the missing values. The GDP data for the preponderant variable in particular had quite a bit of missing data for former Soviet Union eastern bloc countries. The data in many cases just did not exist for collection prior to the late 1980's.

The relationship between regional democracy levels and individual state democracy levels in the first hypothesis was statistically significant. The relationship leads in the same direction as previous research and establishes that as democracy within a region lessens, so does the democracy level of individual states. More research is necessary to establish if the result is caused by the regional democracy levels as a whole or because of some other extraneous factors. Both the presence of oil based exports and instances of armed conflict are causes for decreases in a state's democratic levels. However, the question of how much of a decrease when faced with regional contagion is something that should be examined in the future. As previously mentioned, Leeson and Dean stated that within democratic domino theory, states catch only about eleven percent of their neighbors change in democracy. Is the same case true with contagion theory in this study where regions are affecting state democracy? Do the other variables have a similar small effect or is it greater? These are items that need to be examined further with additional research.

The relationship between regional democracy levels in the absence of a regional power and state democracy levels in the second hypothesis was also statistically significant. The

relationship leads in the same direction as the hypothesis posed but only has any significance in the lack of a weak regional power. Gleditsch's neighborhood theory is a possible reason. In places such as the Caribbean in order to be able to function on the world market, the individual states need to band together in order to have a stronger collective presence economically (Lewis, 2002). Due to the geographic proximity, the agreement between states such as these will have a greater effect on individual state democracy levels due to the higher level of cooperation as opposed to states in a region with a powerful regional power. In these regions states do not need to band together as much as they need to enter into an agreement with the regional power in order to gain access to the world market. There are some limitations to this such as when a state has a polar opposite regime type from that of the regional power. In these cases, there might be some minimal agreements but the weaker state is more apt to ally with another power outside the region. The demand for oil is so great that the money it stands to generate promotes despotism or at the very least a state where the control of most of the revenue is at the top. These states have a resource that has a continued high demand on the world market. As I previously mentioned, though the weight of the relationship on regional democracy and the change it exhibits on individual state democracy is something that needs to be researched more in the future.

The presence of armed violence lowers the level of state democracy but as there are several types of armed insurgency, future research should measure the impact of all types in order to determine if one of these has a greater effect on individual state democracy. Future research should take a more in depth look at whether this affects regional democracy levels as well.

For example, consider Operation Desert Storm. Iraq invaded Kuwait thus lowering their individual democracy levels and in return got invaded. This altered the democratic levels of

states in the region due in great part to the rise in security amongst those states to combat the perceived threat to state sovereignty. This rise in security meant that some democratic restrictions were needed for the greater good of the individual states. Another example of when regional democracy can affect individual state democracy is the presence of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe after WW II. The region was affected by the oppressing presence of the Soviet Union, which in turn affected the democracy levels of the countries within its periphery. States such as Czechoslovakia that were democratic before the war found their democratic level much lower due to the regional influence powered by the U.S.S.R. In either case, additional research is needed to examine this phenomenon.

In limiting the classification of the regions to what I have it is quite possible that significance of some variables might have been missed. In some cases, such as the Eastern Pacific where there is a lot of geographic distance from one end of the region to another, it might be better served to have smaller regions more geographically compacted in order to measure possible effects. Additionally, smaller regions would help the regional power variable in such cases where the second most powerful nation is not much more powerful than the regional power such as in the Asia-Pacific region.

Due to the fluidity of this study and of democracy within states, this is a study that is ongoing. Even now, there is the possibility that the data concerning the Middle East might change on any given day. Due to this, this research should definitely be revisited at some point in the near future in order to see if any of the results have changed. It is also possible that some other variable might prove to be of some significance in having impact on state democracy levels. It is quite possible since studies have rarely focused on the effects of regional democracy on states in the absence of a regional power that some variable was overlooked in the

quantitative process. The results suggest areas of interest for future research. Overall, the results support the idea of contagion theory, that states or regional actors as a whole influence those in their periphery and thus the state democratic process can be influenced by outside factors.

Appendix ⁵

The Americas

Argentina
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Grenada
Guatemala
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
St. Lucia
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela

Central and Eastern Europe

Albania
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia

Asia-Pacific

Afghanistan
Australia
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Brunei
Cambodia
China
Fiji
India
Indonesia
Japan
Laos
Malaysia
Maldives
Mongolia
Myanmar
Nepal
New Zealand
North Korea
Pakistan
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Singapore
Solomon Islands
South Korea
Sri Lanka
Taiwan
Thailand
Vanuatu
Vietnam

Middle East and North Africa

Algeria
Bahrain
Egypt
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Jordan

⁵ The regional power is in bold

Central and Eastern Europe

Cyprus
Czech Republic
Estonia
Hungary
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Macedonia
Moldova
Poland
Romania
Russia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cape Verde
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Comoro Islands
Congo
Cote d'Ivoire
Djibouti
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia

Middle East and North Africa

Kuwait
Lebanon
Libya
Morocco
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
Yemen

Western Europe

Austria
Belgium
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Norway
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

Sub-Saharan Africa

Madagascar

Malawi

Mali

Mauritania

Mauritius

Mozambique

Namibia

Niger

Nigeria

Rwanda

Senegal

Sierra Leone

Somalia

South Africa

Sudan

Tanzania

Togo

Uganda

Zambia

Zimbabwe

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Curriculum Vita

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